

Message Text

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SUBJECT: COMMENTS BY GOM SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND WELFARE ON
PROGRAM OF RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD.

1. IN COURSE OF COURTESY CALL ON SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND WELFARE DR. JORGE JIMENEZ CANTU, I INQUIRED ABOUT THE GOM PROGRAM OF RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD. DR. JIMENEZ CANTU RESPONDED WITH EVIDENT CONCERN AND SINCERITY THAT THE GOM PROGRAM IS NOT ONE OF BIRTH CONTROL BUT RATHER OF FAMILY PLANNING WITHIN A BROADER PROGRAM OF RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD, WHICH INCLUDES CONCERN FOR CHILD NUTRITION AND EDUCATION AS WELL AS FOR MATERNAL HEALTH. DR. CARLOS CAMPILLO SAINZ, UNDERSECRETARY FOR WELFARE, ADDED THAT THE PROGRAM NOT ONLY ENCOURAGES WOMEN TO HAVE CHILDREN SPACED FURTHER APART BUT ALSO TO HAVE FEWER CHILDREN. DR. JIMENEZ CANTU IN MENTIONING THE NEW NATIONAL POPULATION COUNCIL FORESAW ITS ROLE PRINCIPALLY AS ONE OF CONCERN WITH DEMOGRAPHIC PROBLEMS AND STATISTICS, WHEREAS HIS SECRETARIAT WILL CONTINUE ITS FOCUS ON THE HEALTH-RELATED ASPECTS OF POPULATION, INCLUDING FAMILY PLANNING, AS WILL IMSS AND ISSSTE, THE MEXICAN SOCIAL SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS. OF PRIME IMPORTANCE IN HIS VIEW IS THE EMPHASIS OF THE PROGRAM ON HUMAN DIGNITY AND ON FREEDOM OF CHOICE BY THE INDIVIDUAL. IN NO SENSE IS THE PROGRAM TO BE IMPOSED BY THE GOM. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH, HE RESPONDED THAT NOT ONLY HAD THERE BEEN NO OBJECTION, BUT THE CHURCH SEEMS TO BE ACTIVELY SUPPORTING THE PROGRAM.

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2. JIMENEZ CANTU QUOTED A NUMBER OF NEW STATISTICS CONCERNING THE

SECRETARIAT'S PROGRAM. THERE ARE 225 CLASS A CLINICS AND HOSPITALS PROVIDING FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES. BY YEAR'S END ANOTHER 500 CLASS B CLINICS WILL BE ADDED, INCREASING THE NUMBER OF WOMEN PARTICIPANTS FROM A CURRENT 380,000 TO 600,000. HE THEN STATED THERE ARE 11.5 MILLION WOMEN IN THE FERTILE AGE (15-44), OF WHOM 3 MILLION ARE PREGNANT EACH YEAR. WITH 500,000 ABORTIONS EACH YEAR, YEARLY BIRTHS ARE 2.5 MILLION. IF 600,000 OF THESE WOMEN ARE PROVIDED WITH BIRTH CONTROL FACILITIES, THEN BIRTHS WILL BE REDUCED APPROXIMATLY 20 PERCENT.

3. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE STATISTICS OF DR. JIMENEZ CANTU MAY BE SOMEWHAT OPTIMISTIC, HIS COMMITMENT TO THE BROADER CONCEPT OF RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD IS APPARENT. HE RECOGNIZES THAT MUCH REMAINS TO BE DONE, ESPECIALLY IN THE RURAL SECTOR. IT WAS ALSO INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT HE FEELS THAT THE NATIONAL POPULATION COUNCIL WILL NOT SIGNIFICANTLY ALTER THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SECRETARIAT OF HEALTH AND WELFARE.
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